

January 1991

**TO: Executive Addressed**

**FR: James E. Lukaszewski, APR Chairman**

**RE: Preparing for Military and War-related Questions (Special Gulf War Edition)**

Your company may now be sorting out its policies and procedures involving employees called up for military service due to the situation in the Middle East. Here's a brief summary of issues and questions as well as some mistake and embarrassment avoidance suggestions that may be useful as you move through the process.

## KEY CONCERNS

- Security, Human Resources and Public Affairs must coordinate with each other in planning for, and then responding to, visibility caused by employee military activity.
- Security monitors where employees are in all Middle Eastern countries plus those countries where Arab terrorist activity is likely to occur. The names of those employees and some basic data about them need to be shared with Human Resources and Public Affairs (national security issues may intrude in certain aspects of this).
- Human Resources is involved because it manages the people aspects of these situations -- benefits, personnel policies, etc. Chances are your Employee Assistance Program is a part of the Human Resources function. Current policies on trauma response need to be reviewed in light of the impact on co-workers and the community should an employee be killed, wounded or disabled by military action or accident.
- Public Affairs/Media Relations is involved because visibility means media calls. In most companies such calls are forwarded initially to the Public Affairs department. The Public Affairs function should probably drive the entire process since it is your front line for external interests.
- The Chairman: Standby statements need to be in place for the Chairman in the event that your company's employees are the first hurt or killed in combat or military accidents. The media won't be satisfied with talking to just any spokesperson -- they're going to want to hear from the boss.
- Briefing Operations: For the duration of the military action and any subsequent follow-up activity that involves your employee-reservists, a reasonably frequent schedule of briefing sessions should be held by this Response Team to:
  - Stay abreast of personnel changes and policies
  - Monitor how other companies are responding to the visibility caused by injury, disablement or death due to the military action or military accidents
  - Learn from and watch how the news media is covering military stories, and include media interests and patterns of behavior in your preparation process
  - Manage information, especially in the terrorist situation, so as not to put other employees or their families at risk

## QUESTIONS WHICH REQUIRE ANSWERS THAT MAY CREATE NEW OR REFINE EXISTING CORPORATE POLICY

- **Body Bags:** What will the company's public response be when asked about employees killed by military action or accident? (These low intensity, localized conflicts may not produce large numbers of casualties or fatalities. This means that those that do occur will receive a disproportionate amount of public and media attention.)
- **Casualties:** How will your company respond when wounded employees return to the United States?
- **Severe Casualties:** How will your company respond to questions involving employees who are clearly disabled in some permanent way? (Actually there a variety of probable stories here -- not just stories about how your company fulfills the requirements of the law with respect to restoring the individual's job rights and salary. Two possible stories involve: 1) how that individual is succeeding, or failing, on the job in the company environment as a disabled employee and 2) the impact on his/her family. At least one family member is likely to say publicly that the company is not doing enough.)
- **Legal Issues:** At some point the Legal Department needs to think about the kinds of questions that will be raised should an employee be too disabled to work or feels that the company is not complying with the law with respect to how his/her benefits or job arrangement are handled.

## MEDIA RELATIONS QUESTIONS

- **Scratching and Digging:** As the media continues to look for story material in the Middle East and here at home, sooner or later they will need to turn to the vendors of war materials. We've already seen stories on boots, uniforms, night vision goggles and other military equipment. It won't be long before there will be stories on the technology of war and those who produce and provide that technology.

The challenge in this kind of media situation is to be prepared with messages and stories you want to talk about in addition to what the reporter has asked about. This is especially true if, as you might expect, the media are inquiring about programs or systems which you are not authorized to say a great deal about or even acknowledge. The opportunity to share interesting insights and products remains -- if you are ready.

- **The Toilet Seat Mentality:** Remember, the media's primary story objectives when covering defense contracting and military vendors are profiteering, mistakes and stupidity -- all in the name of waste and mismanagement or risk to our service people. The current attention to uniform and boot design are prime examples. Everyone remembers the \$200 screw driver and the \$2,000 toilet seat. You probably have a couple like these, too. Where are they? Are you prepared to talk about them?

If you'd like to discuss further any of the concerns, concepts, or questions raised in this special Gulf War edition of Executive Action, please call me at (914) 681-0000.

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